5: Crowder J-5 (1955-1961) 1962
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The French sociologist Mercier has already remarked the fundamental homogeneity of Senegal's main ethnic groups, which 'Whatever their cultural differences and whatever their traditional hostility to one another (which has by no means completely disappeared) all had the same type of social and political organisation.'

Of the major groups the Wolof and the Lebou are for all intents and purposes indistinguishable, the Lebou being the Wolof-speaking inhabitants of the Cape Verde peninsula. The Serer are also very closely related to the Wolof, being considered as tribal cousins. The Toucouleur, Serer and Fula are traditionally connected, it being held that the Toucouleur are the result of an ancient mixing between the Serers, with whom they have a strong joke-relationship, and the Fulas whose language is very close to their own. Thus nearly three-quarters of the population have closer historical and ethnic connexions than exist in any other area of West Africa save Hausaland in Northern Nigeria. With the exception of the Serers, of whom a substantial minority is Christian, these people are almost exclusively Muslim. They also tend today to use Wolof as a lingua franca. Even the Diola, from the Casamance, which is in many ways a minority area of Senegal, especially because it is cut off from the north by the Gambia, have strong traditional connexions with the Serer and assert in effect that they are descended from the same ancestor. This leaves only the Mandingo people out of the pattern and as we shall see they do tend to be a minority group in Senegal.

There is thus at the basis of Senegalese society an indigenous homegeneity that is nothing to do with the French policy of assimilation, and which has been greatly encouraged by a common adherence to Islam, where Marabouts or religious leaders of one tribe have considerable influence over Muslims of other ethnic origins.

The French administration, however, through its policy of direct rule did in fact make one major contribution towards

5: Crowder J-5 (1955-1961) 1962
MS37 Senegal MS37

184 563 [631] this homogeneity by reducing the traditional authority of the chiefs who more than anyone else are responsible for the preservation of ethnic differences, in being the repositories of tribal customs.

For Senegal as a whole, this homogeneity does not go beyond similarities in socio-political structure, a common adherence to Islam, uniformity in styles of dress, a tradition of common relationship and a growing use of Wolof as a lingua franca. Only in the larger towns has there been 563 [369] any general break-down of traditional tribal barriers and only in the town does one find a high incidence of inter-ethnic habitation and, more important still, inter-ethnic marriage. And since it was mainly in the towns that the French applied their policy of assimilation it is reasonable to assume that there is probably some correlation between the two. In the first place the French in Senegal have always tended to think of the local inhabitants as Senegalese rather than Wolof or Serer, which runs contrary to the common European attitude to ethnic divisions, particularly in British territories where the tendency was always to emphasise the tribal origin of an African rather than the colony in which he lived. Indeed the British administrators, as Lord Lugard himself observed, were always great partisans of particular ethnic groups. Such an attitude, however, has not always been absent in Senegal. For instance Mercier has remarked that certain European foremen in factories tended to choose workers of the same ethnic group in order to avoid possible friction, but he adds that this was not always justified.

563 619 [369] In the *Quatre Communes*, which for a long time *were* Senegal as far as the French were concerned, the inhabitants came to accept from early on the idea of being Senegalese as well as Wolof and Serers. Or they might have thought of themselves parochially as St. Louisiens or Dakarois. With their elected deputy, their *Conseil-Général*, and their municipal councils, the Senegalese crossed early on the barrier between tribalism and nationalism, a result for which other African